

# WHAT WE HEARD

Imagine West End  
Waterfront | Round Two  
Public Engagement Report

Design Approaches and  
Ideas

October 2023

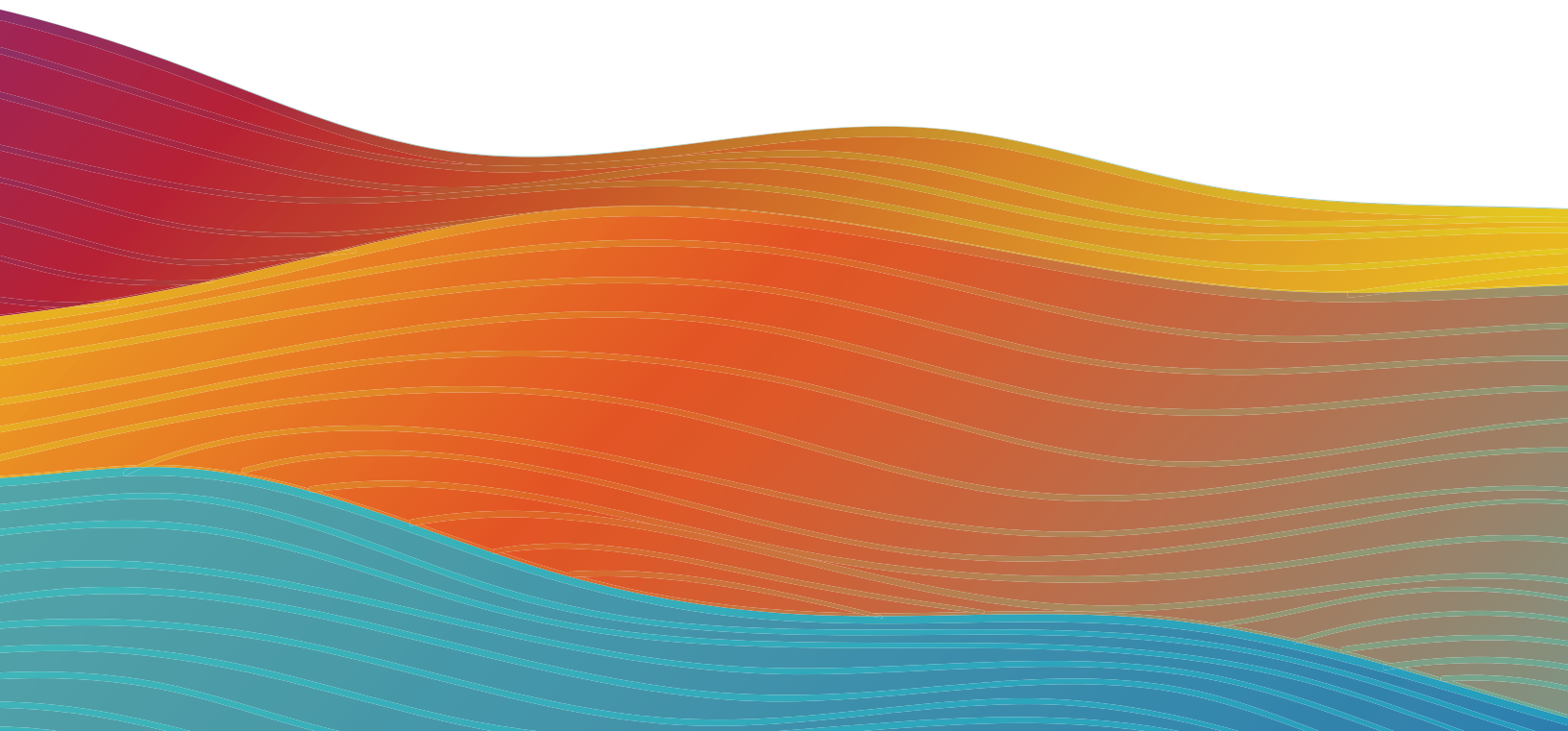


The project area's parks, beaches, and streets are part of the unceded, traditional, and ancestral territories of the x̱m̱əθḵʷəy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tseil-Wautuh) Nations and is a place of great cultural, spiritual, and ecological significance.

There are numerous resources available to learn more about the relationships that x̱m̱əθḵʷəy̱əm, Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh, and səlilwətaɬ have with the land and waters now known as Vancouver. The Nations' websites contain information about their histories, cultures, governance, and ways of affirming their continuity on these lands:

- Musqueam Indian Band: [musqueam.bc.ca](http://musqueam.bc.ca)
- Squamish Nation: [squamish.net](http://squamish.net)
- Tseil-Wautuh Nation: [twnation.ca](http://twnation.ca)

Please visit the Vancouver Park Board and City of Vancouver websites to learn more about the Park Board's Reconciliation Mission, Vision, and Values and what it means for the City of Vancouver to be a City of Reconciliation: <https://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/why-reconciliation.aspx>



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## 1.0 Executive summary

The Vancouver Park Board and the City of Vancouver are planning for the future of the West End’s oceanfront parks, beaches, and streets.

The West End Waterfront Plan is a long-term vision and being created with extensive community input and engagement. The vision seeks to:

- Support the Host Nations’ visibility and access as rights and title holders on these lands
- Improve neighbourhood connections and access to the area
- Enhance the seawall and Seaside Greenway experience
- Address climate change and sea level rise to improve the resilience of the West End waterfront and region
- Restore shoreline habitats and support the ecological revitalization of the area
- Upgrade services, facilities, and infrastructure to meet increased population demand
- Enhance the parks’ identities and how people experience them

The work to develop the West End Waterfront Plan takes places over five phases:



From Apr 21 to Jun 1, the Vancouver Park Board and City of Vancouver led Round 2: Design Approaches and Ideas public and stakeholder engagement.

In this round of engagement we shared three initial design approaches for the area (Weave, Carve, and Seed) and the vision, principles, and goals from Round 1: Listen and Learn for community input. To briefly summarize the design approaches:

- **Weave** emphasizes and celebrates park activation, public life, and the movement of people by weaving diverse activities throughout the length of the park.
- **Carve** focusses on the dynamic qualities of water, by integrating ways for people to experience fresh and salt water throughout the site.
- **Seed** prioritizes ecology and biodiversity and is influenced by the forests of Stanley Park and the historic salt marsh of False Creek.

For more details on Weave, Carve, and Seed, view the [Introduction to Design Approaches and Ideas](#).



## How we engaged:

In Round 2: Design Approaches and Ideas community shared input on:

- draft Vision, Principles, and Goals
- public life which included programming and activities as well as facilities and amenities
- transportation needs
- environment including ecology, adapting to sea level rise and climate change, and;
- emerging big ideas for key areas of the waterfront.

The public was notified of the engagement process through promotional postcards, signage and posters in parks and neighbourhood hubs, social media, online advertising, mailing lists and newsletters, and information bulletins to media.

## Summary of how we engaged



Children & Youth Planning/Design Program



In-person stakeholder workshops



Community Advisory Group



Pop-ups at English Bay and the Gathering Place CC



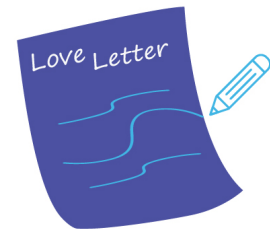
Virtual workshops



Ongoing conversations with impacted groups and equity-deserving communities



Online Survey



Shape Your City - love letters to the West End Waterfront

## Photos



Stakeholders and the public were engaged in a variety of ways included at workshops (top left) and at pop-up events (top right)

## What we heard, the short version:

We heard overall agreement with the Vision, Principles, and Goals and that clearer language around the vision would help people better understand and respond to design approaches.

We received valuable feedback on a series of “possible big ideas” to explore for the West End waterfront. The next round of design work will combine elements from each of the three approaches and possible big ideas into a preferred design. Key areas of interest we heard are:

- accessibility to the water for all ages and abilities
- flexible, multi-functional gathering spaces
- enhancing current park spaces, amenities and facilities while maintaining the peaceful and green qualities of the area today
- naturalized solutions where possible to address climate change, such as sea level rise celebrating and supporting Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Peoples and culture in the area through design, programming, and learning opportunities.
- prioritizing active and sustainable transportation that is safe and comfortable for people of all ages and abilities

The project team will draw from this feedback to develop one preferred design concept, which will be shared back with the public in the fall of 2023. We are grateful for this opportunity to hear from many individuals and groups as we work together to design a West End waterfront that restores ecology and habitat and meets the needs of residents and visitors for many generations to come.

In Round 1, the project team consistently heard that people want to see the following elements prioritized for the West End waterfront:

- A unique and valued place
- Environmental and ecological health
- Flexible and multi-functional
- Safe, accessible, and inclusive
- Indigenous use, history, and awareness
- Improved and expanded facilities

## 2.0 Project overview

### 2.1 About the project

The Vancouver Park Board and the City of Vancouver are planning for the future of the West End's oceanfront parks, beaches, and streets. The West End Waterfront Plan is being created with extensive community input and engagement and seeks to:

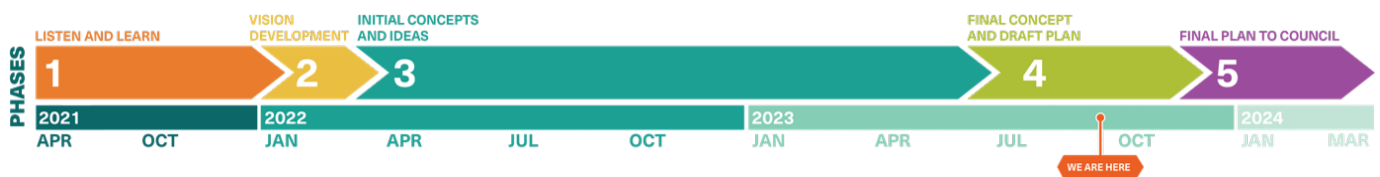
- Support the Host Nations' visibility and access as rights and title holders on these lands
- Improve neighbourhood connections and access to the area
- Enhance the seawall and Seaside Greenway experience
- Address climate change and sea level rise to improve the resilience of the West End waterfront
- Restore shoreline habitats and support the ecological revitalization of the area
- Upgrade services, facilities, and infrastructure to meet increased population demand
- Enhance the parks' identities and how people experience them



### 2.2 Where we are now: Round 2 of engagement

This engagement report shares what we heard from engaging on the preliminary Design Approaches & Ideas during spring 2023. Feedback gathered during this round builds on the input of thousands of people who identified what is important about the West End waterfront during the initial 'Listen and Learn' round of engagement in fall 2021.

Figure 1: Project timeline of engagement



During Listen and Learn engagement, community members shared their thoughts on past and current use of the project area, and hopes for the future.

Feedback gathered in the initial round informed the development of the project's draft Vision, Principles and Goals (VPGs), as well as three preliminary design approaches and emerging big ideas for the area that were shared with the public for feedback in Round 2 engagement in spring 2023.



### 3.0 What we did: Overview of round 2: design approaches & ideas

Community members shared their views on the draft Vision, Principles and Goals, and desired activities, facilities, transportation needs, and emerging big ideas in key areas of the West End waterfront. Round 2 also aimed to build excitement, strengthen relationships with different user groups, and to prepare the public for change. Feedback gathered in Round 2 informed the development of a preferred design concept that incorporated features from the three design approaches and emerging big ideas.

At every stage of the project we are hosting ongoing consultation and conversations with the Host Nations. These conversations and formal processes have been critical to ensure the project will ultimately support Indigenous use and cultural practice, respect Rights and Title, and the protection, enhancement and stewardship of the area’s land and waters.

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Figure 2: Process of how the final draft plan was developed



### 3.1 Ongoing consultation with the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations

At every stage of the project we are hosting ongoing consultation and conversations with the Host Nations. These conversations and formal processes have been critical to ensure the project will ultimately support Indigenous use and cultural practice, respect Rights and Title, and the protection, enhancement and stewardship of the area's land and waters.

### 3.2 How we engaged

To plan the engagement, the project team sought input from the Community Advisory Group, a volunteer committee representing a diversity of perspectives and experiences from residents who care about Vancouver's West End and are interested in the plan area. The Committee provided feedback on the engagement approach to help ensure it was appropriate and accessible to a broad audience.

A variety of engagement methods were developed to provide flexibility and choice for people to participate. An online survey on Shape Your City provided a central place for any interested person to provide input when convenient to them. The survey was promoted through postcards, signage and posters on site as well as in key locations in the West End, through e-newsletter updates and on social media.

To support more in-depth conversations, a mix of in-person and virtual workshops were held with key groups. Pop-up sessions on the site provided opportunities for passersby in the project area to learn more and share feedback on the spot with the project team.

"Love letters" to the West End waterfront offered an opportunity to share what people love most about the area, and what they hope to see in its future.

Engagement methods are detailed in Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix A: Detailed engagement methods.

#### Summary of engagement methods

##### Web engagement

- 1,477 Public survey responses
- Over 11,000 project website visits during engagement phase

##### Communications

- Approximately 50 posters printed
- Over 34,000 postcards distributed
- Over 850 people used up for the project mailing list

##### Public and stakeholder engagement

- 2 stakeholder workshops
- 5 virtual workshops
- 4 pop-ups (3 at English Bay Beach and 1 at Gathering Place)

### 3.2 Who We Heard From

Through these methods and ongoing conversations, the project team reached out to a variety of people interested in, or potentially impacted by the plan for the West End waterfront.

The engagement process aims to centre equity in who we reach and our relationships, and to provide mutual learning opportunities for all stakeholders to understand common, and sometimes competing, needs and interests.

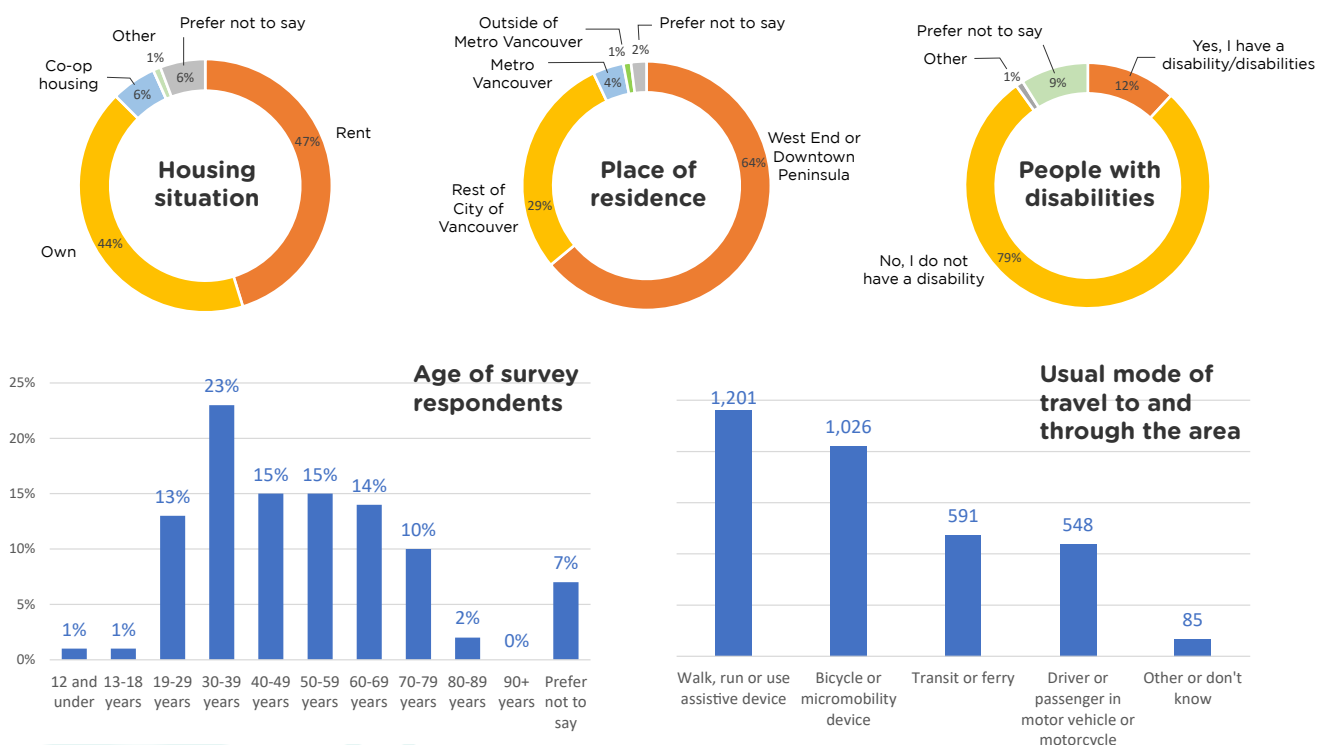
Groups and organisations Who we reach out to who shared input on the Design Approaches & Ideas are listed and described in detail in Table 3 in Appendix A: Detailed engagement methods.

Throughout the engagement period, the project team heard from:

- Community Advisory Group (15 volunteer members of the public)
- Online survey (1,477 respondents)
- Stakeholder workshops (32+ participants)
- Virtual workshops (30 participants)
- Pop-ups at English Bay and Gathering Place (approximately 320 interactions)
- Children & Youth Planning/Design Program (3 schools, 85 students)
- Love Letters to the West End waterfront (49 paper and virtual submissions)

Participants represented individuals who live, work and/or visit the West End waterfront area. Individuals and groups with a special interest in the area were also included: for example, accessibility groups and champions; 2SLGBTQA+ groups; arts, recreation and events organizers; youth and younger people; and seniors and older adults. The full survey demographic questions summary is included in Appendix C: Demographic summary from online survey.

Figure 3: Demographic summary of survey respondents



## 4.0 What we heard

Round 2 engagement feedback focused on six main topics informing the design approach, design elements, and qualities of the West End waterfront:

1. Vision, Principles and Goals
2. Public life: programming and activities
3. Public life: facilities and amenities
4. Moving around
5. Environment: ecology, adapting to sea level rise, climate change
6. Possible big ideas

Most would like to see:

- a mix of active and passive uses and balance of vibrant and quiet moments throughout the site. Some would like better access to the water.
- improved facilities like washrooms, changing areas, and water stations.
- active and sustainable transportation prioritized, while ensuring that residents and visitors who drive continue to be able to access the area and park near their destinations.
- Deep appreciation for the quiet, peaceful and green qualities of the area today

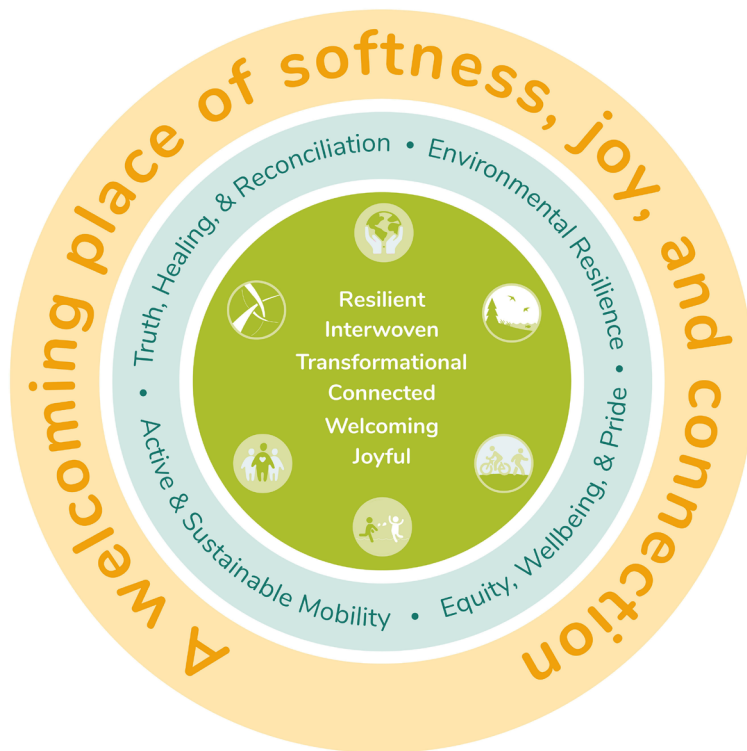
Each section includes three key takeaways from engagement on the Design Approaches & Ideas. More detailed feedback from the online survey, stakeholder workshops, virtual workshops, and pop-ups are included in Appendix B: Detailed Findings.

## 4.1 Vision, Principles and Goals

Based on what was heard in Round 1 of engagement, the project team developed a Vision, Principles, and Goals to ground the design process for Imagine West End Waterfront.

The Vision, Principles and Goals were shared in all engagement events, and participants were encouraged to reflect on how well they reflect their ideas for the future of the West End waterfront. Overall, we heard overall agreement that the draft Vision, Principles and Goals reflect what they hoped to see for the West End Waterfront. We also heard that clearer language around the vision would help people better understand and respond to questions about the design approaches and ideas.

Figure 4: Visions, principles and goals developed by the project team that were shared with stakeholders and the public



A vision describes a desired outcome or a place where we agree we would like to journey towards together. This is supported by principles that guide the development of that vision, and goals that help to set targets for getting us there.

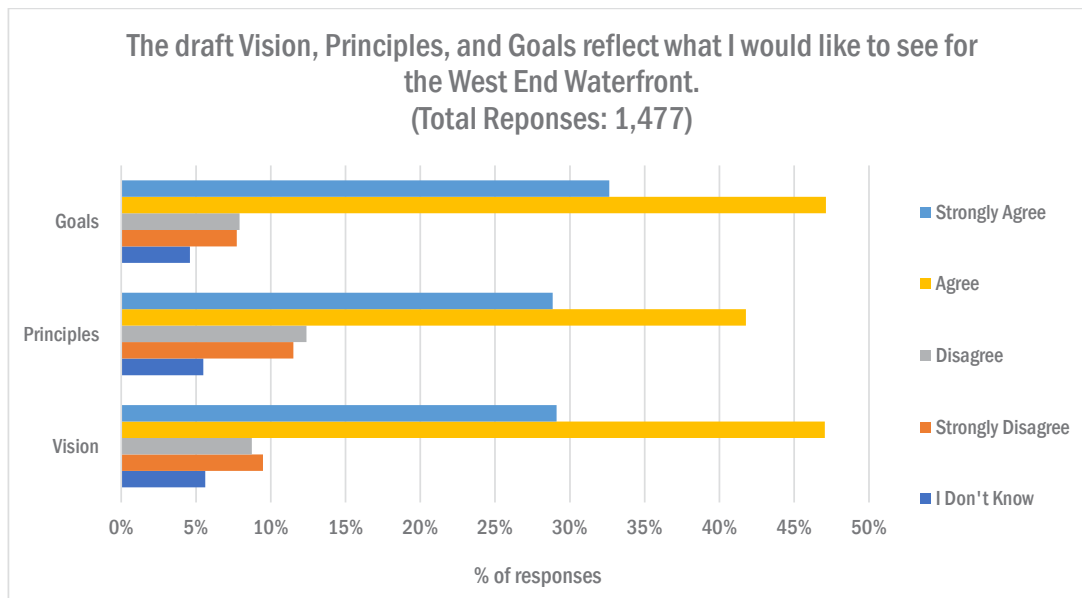
- Outer Ring = Vision
- Middle Ring = Principles
- Inner Circle = Goals

In the survey, most respondents (76%) agreed or strongly agreed with the draft vision; principles (71%), and goals (80%). A smaller percentage of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the draft vision (18%), principles (17%), and goals (12%).

Respondents were invited to share anything else they felt should be considered; responses are summarized below.

Please see Appendix B - Detailed Findings for a full summary of results.

Figure 5: Responses to the draft Vision, Principles and Goals



## 4.2 Public life: Activities

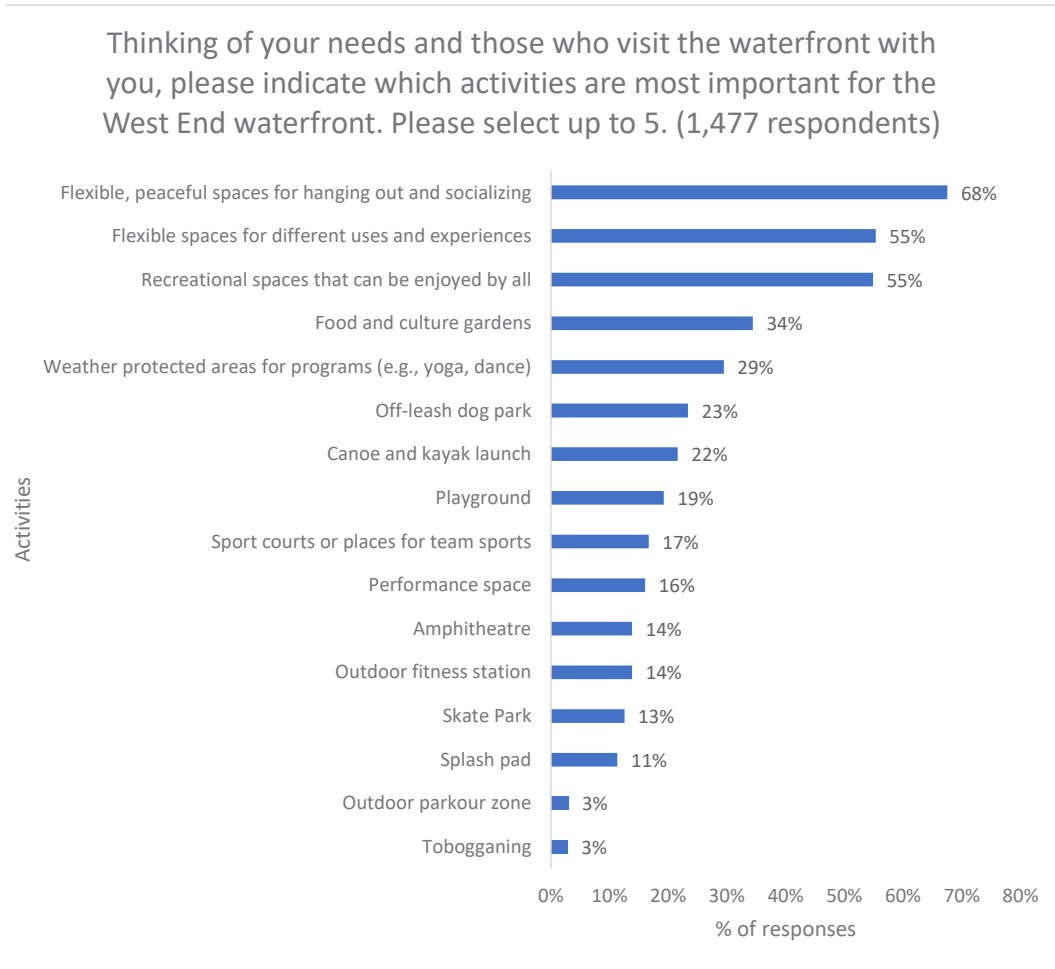
Key takeaways:

- **Provide commercial and food and beverage opportunities:** respondents would like to see more food and beverage options as well as space for small vendors near the beach to bring more people to the area and provide a lively experience.
- **Keep and create recreational spaces that can be used year-round:** respondents were interested in various types of active recreation on land and water, including team sports, rollerskating, skateboarding, non-motorized boating, and swimming. In terms of using the space in all seasons, we heard suggestions to provide more shade, rain protection, and cozy spaces to allow for all-season enjoyment of the West End waterfront.
- **Maintain peaceful qualities and greenspace:** while there was excitement about dedicated spaces for active recreation and other programmed uses, engagement participants were strongly supportive of maintaining the peaceful qualities of the site. Respondents indicated it was important to be able to come to the waterfront to relax, be in nature, and have respite from the busyness of city life.

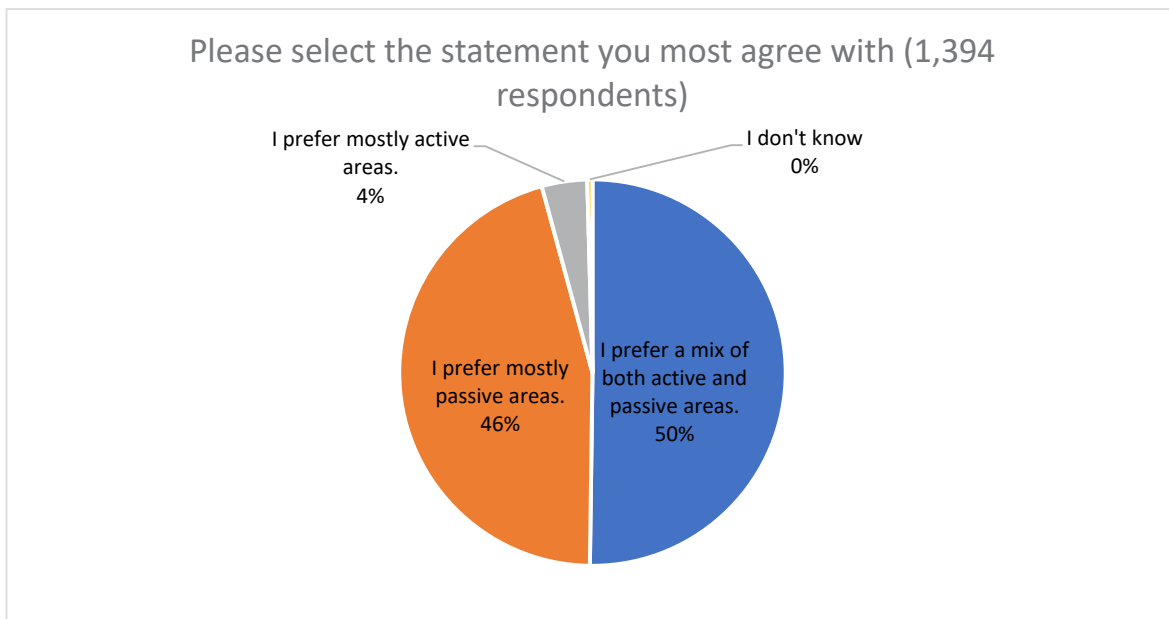
Survey respondents were asked to share (1) their top activities for the future of the area and (2) their preference for active and/or passive uses. When it came to top activities, flexible, peaceful spaces; flexible spaces for different uses and experiences; recreational spaces for people of all generations; food and culture gardens; and weather-protected areas for programs were the top choices. Half of respondents would prefer a both of active and passive areas.

Survey results are shown in Figures 6 and 7.

**Figure 6: Popular activities of survey respondents**



**Figure 7: Preference for active or passive areas by survey respondents**



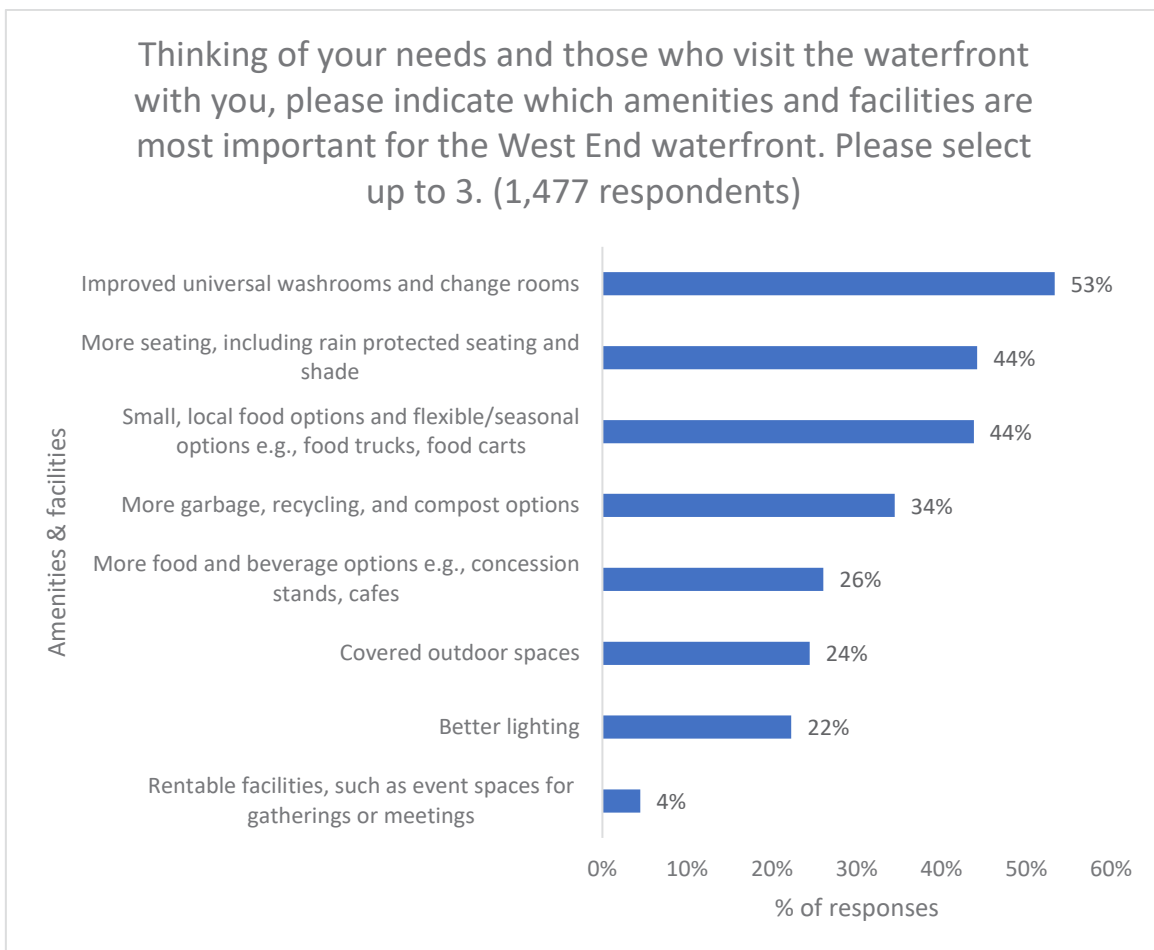
### 4.3 Public life: Facilities and amenities

Key takeaways:

- **Upgrade amenities to improve accessibility and comfort:** we heard a desire for general improvements, including more seating options, areas for gathering, and adding more washrooms and change rooms that are accessible and conveniently located; a need for better waste management throughout the area was also raised.
- **Provide affordable experiences, such as events and food and beverage opportunities:** having affordable food and beverage vendors along the beach was suggested, including space for small kiosks as well as sit-down businesses. Providing spaces for various artistic, cultural, and festival events, including community-led events, were seen to enhance the area.
- **Upgrade washrooms, changing room and beach facilities:** respondents would like to see improvements to washrooms and changing room or storage facilities. We heard that upgraded washrooms, larger lockers for public use, and features for people swimming and enjoying the beach such as outdoor showers and wash stations, would improve people’s experiences of the area.

Please see Appendix B – Detailed Findings for a full summary of results.

Figure 8: Needs of survey respondents when visiting the waterfront





## 4.4 Moving around: Transportation, mobility, and accessibility

Key takeaways:

- **Provide separation between modes and people travelling at different speeds:** Respondents would prefer pathways that are wide enough for people to travel side-by-side. Some prefer to have the pathway closest to the water be designated for pedestrians, while others would like the cycling path to be by the water. Survey responses revealed that, for those walking and/or using mobility aids, separation from car traffic was the top value. For those cycling or using micro-mobility devices, avoiding conflicts with others while moving at different speeds was most important.
- **Make it safe and comfortable for people to walk, cycle and roll:** Respondents want to move around easily. And, identified design features to help with this: signage with destinations, consistent pathway design, seating along walking paths, ramps, and tactile surfaces for people using a support cane. Gentle slopes and smooth surfaces would help people access the park and beach areas easily. Include paths to the beach accessible by wheelchair. Add boardwalks over the water and ramps from the park to the water for people using mobility aids and strollers.
- **Make cycling safe, convenient, comfortable and fun for people of all ages and abilities:** We heard that people often travel to and through the West End waterfront with their families, and that accommodating people riding e-bikes (with wider pathways and parking spaces) would support accessing the area and its amenities. Some respondents wanted improved connections to existing (e.g., neighbourhood greenways in the West End, Burrard Bridge) and future cycling infrastructure (e.g., Granville Bridge).

When asked what they value most about moving to and through the West End waterfront by walking or using mobility aids, nearly three-quarters of respondents valued one or more of the top three responses which were:

- Separation from car traffic
- Proximity to the ocean
- Avoiding conflicts with others moving at different speeds

When asked what they value most about moving to and through the West End waterfront by cycling or using micro-mobility devices (e.g., skateboards, scooters), the most respondents chose:

- Avoiding conflicts with others moving at different speeds
- Separation from car traffic

Figure 9: Survey respondents' values when walking or using mobility aids

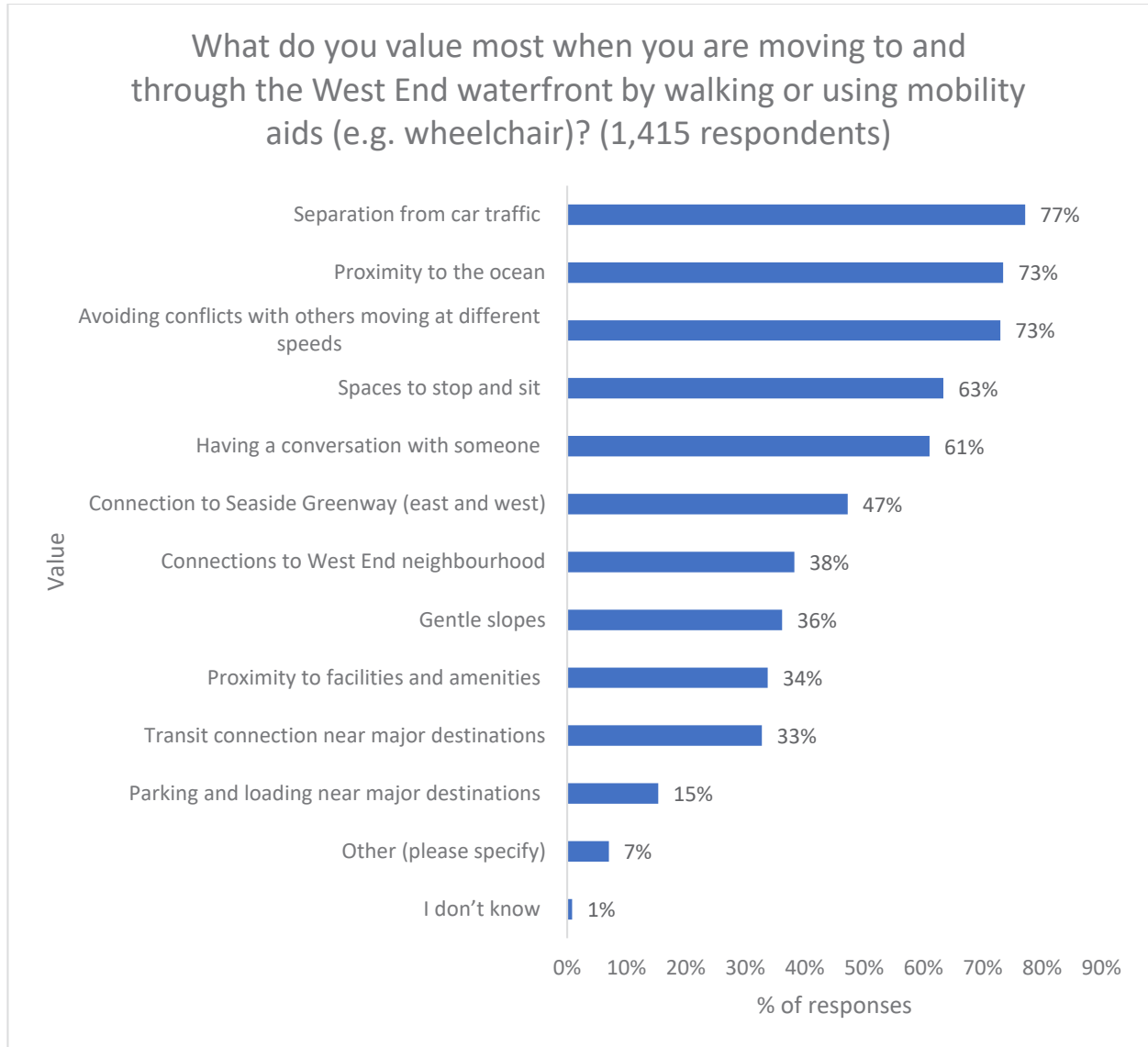
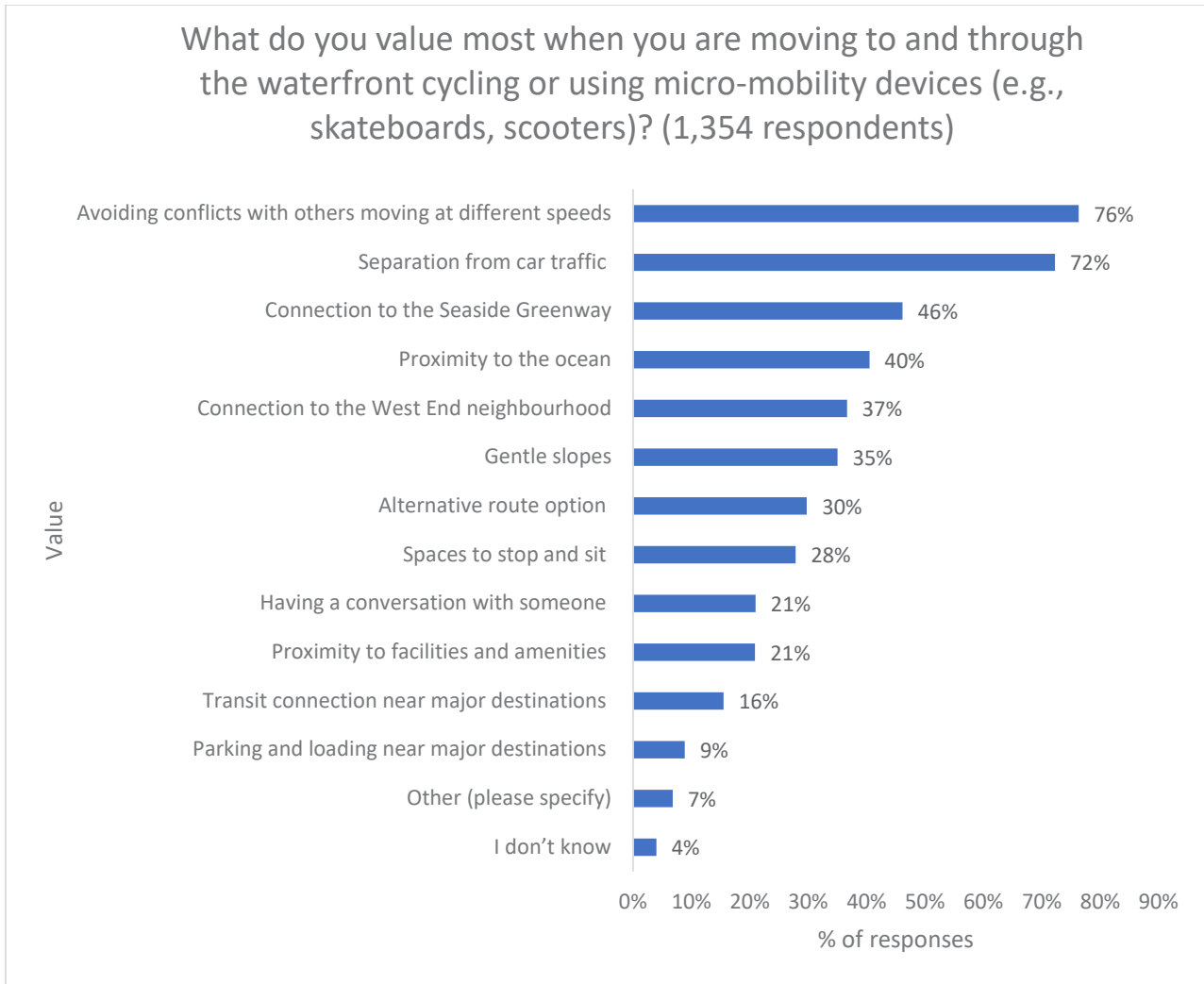


Figure 10: Survey respondents' values when cycling or using micromobility devices



## 4.6 Environment: ecology, adapting to sea level rise, climate change

### Key takeaways

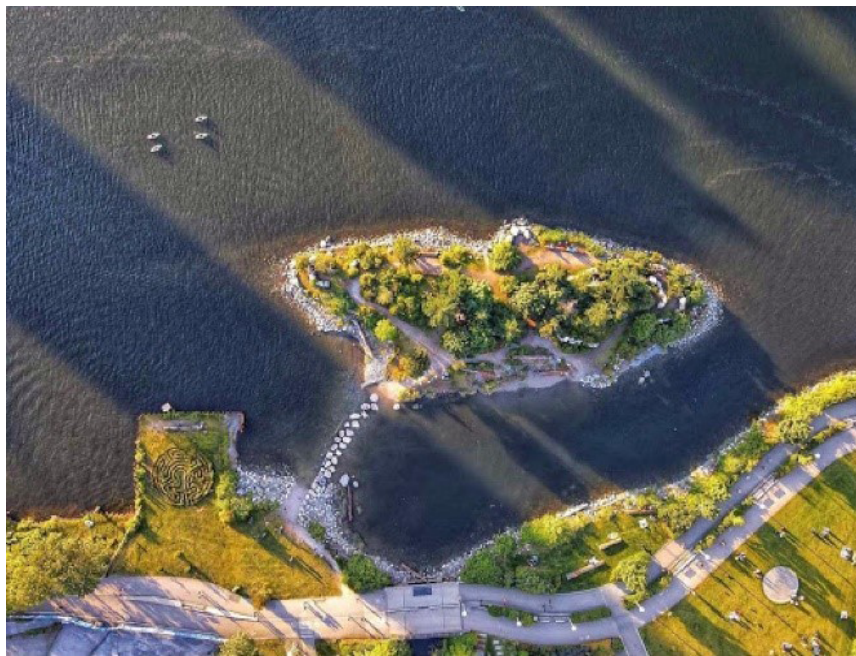
- **Balance a natural shoreline with human access:** overall support for the shoreline design approaches that provide more habitat and naturalized space along the waterfront. Desire to understand how elements like salt marshes could enhance human enjoyment of the area, given the need to accommodate more people.
- **Take a natural and biophilic approach in design materials:** interest in using natural, soft materials to bring people closer to the water; some concerns about the user-friendliness of materials like concrete in terraced seating which could pose safety challenges.
- **Design for interactive experiences with nature:** desire to enhance human access to the ocean and naturalized spaces.

While each of the shoreline approaches are quite distinct, overall respondents want to see the natural environment reflected in the next phase of shoreline design. Respondents highlighted the desire for more natural materials and textures over manmade shoreline structure such as cement terracing. Engagement participants also want the design for sea level adaptation to prioritize environmental and wildlife protection.

We also heard concerns about how each of the shoreline designs needs to consider visitors with mobility challenges.

In the survey, people could view sketched elevations of the four shoreline approaches and photos that show what each could look like. Responses to survey questions about the four possible shoreline approaches follow.

### Habitat island and salt marsh

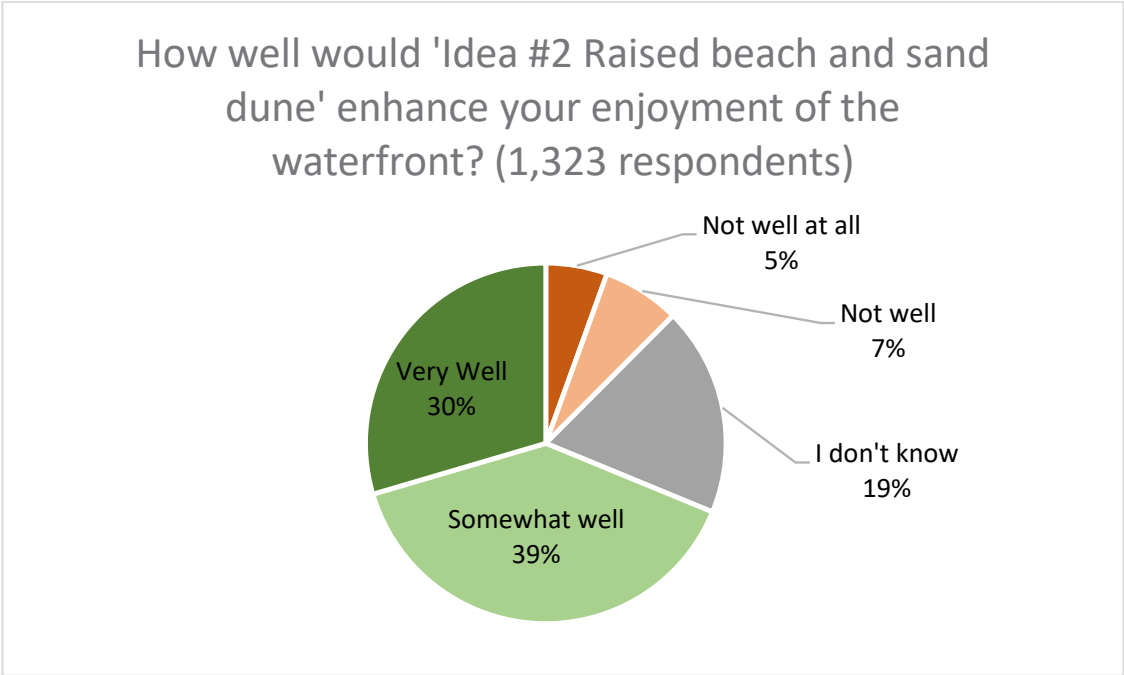


Precedent image of a habitat island at Hinge Park, Vancouver (photo credit: Gavin Biglow)



Precedent image of a salt marsh on Toms Cove on Assateague Island, Virginia (photo credit: National Park Service)

Figure 11: Interest of survey respondents in habitat islands and salt marshes

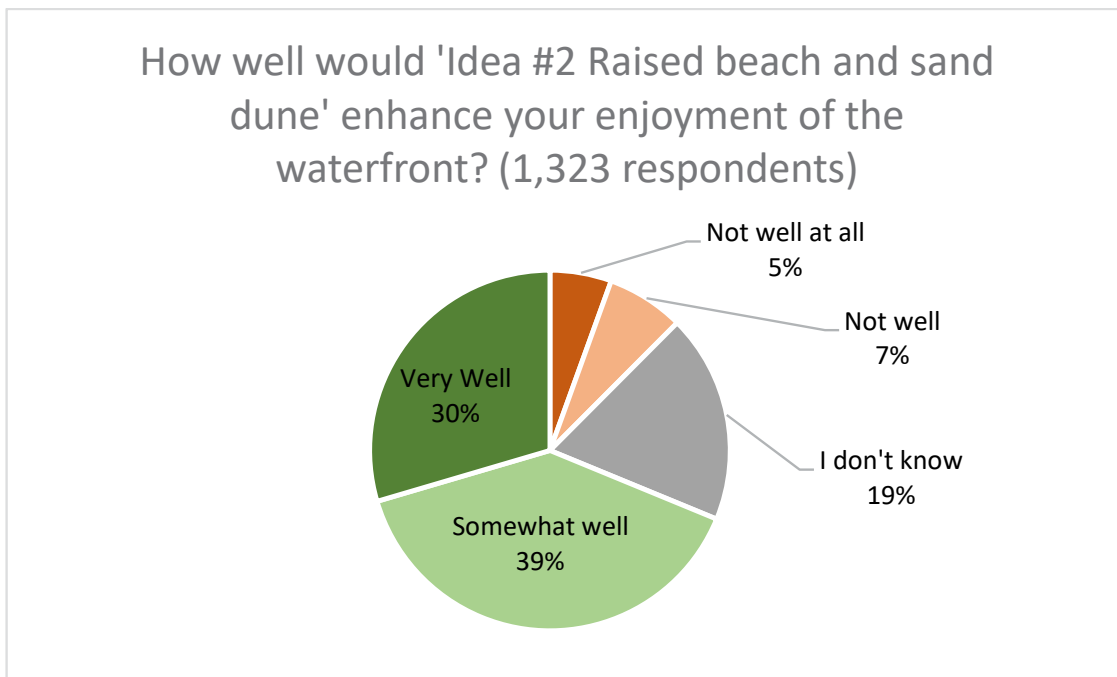


## Raised beach and sand dune



Precedent image of sand dunes along The Beach at Expedia Group, Elliott Bay, Seattle (photo credit: Marion Brenner + landscape design by Surfacedesign)

Figure 12: Interest of survey respondents in a raised beach and sand dunes

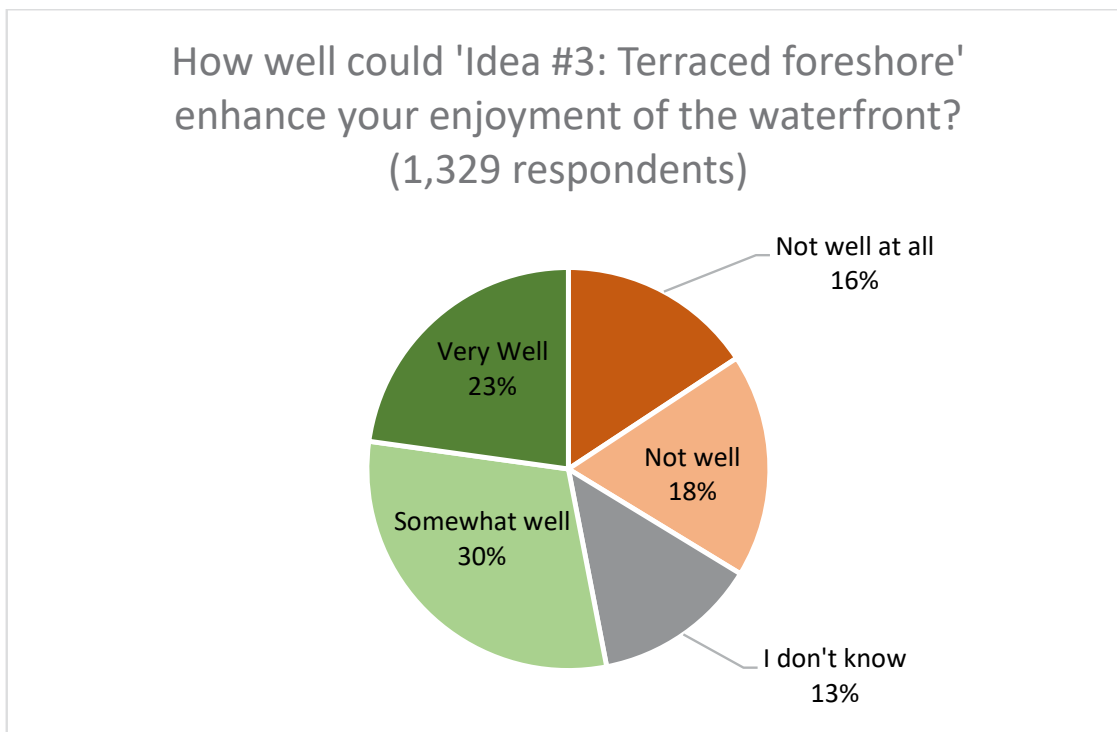


## Terraced foreshore



Precedent image of terraced public space in Zadar, Croatia (photo credit: Dubravko grakalic + design by Nikola Bašić)

Figure 13: Interest of survey respondents in terraced foreshore

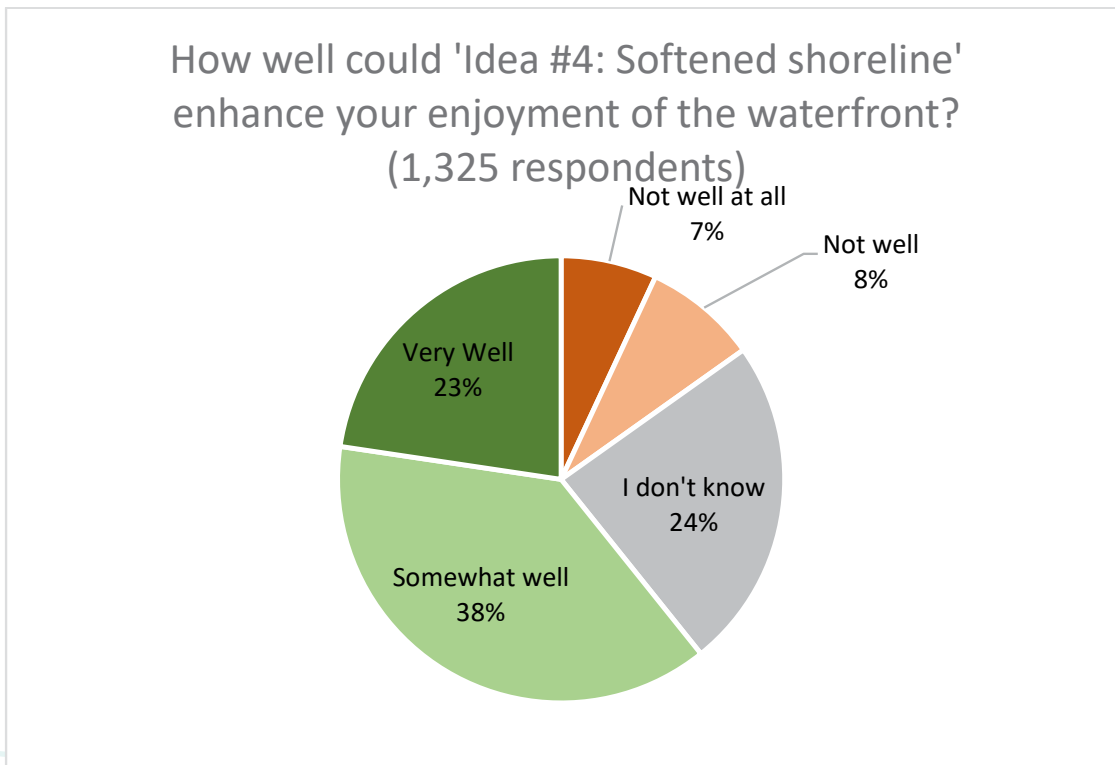


## Softened shoreline



Precedent image of a softened shoreline at New Brighton Park, Vancouver (photo credit: Vancouver Park Board)

Figure 14: Interest of survey respondents in a softened shoreline





## 4.7 Possible big ideas

The below section includes feedback received on the proposed “big ideas” for the West End waterfront. These ideas were presented in the online survey and at virtual and in-person workshops and meetings (big ideas for the bathhouse area were only shown at workshops and special interest group meetings).

Key takeaways:

Across engagement, we heard some consistent themes to guide the refining of designs overall, specifically the possible big ideas. These included:

- **Integrate accessible design:** including accessibility to the water and movement pathways, but also advice on materials and design details that will allow for those with mobility devices to access the spaces easily.
- **Provide a variety of multi-functional gathering spaces:** including spaces for events and programming, but also informal spaces that allow for a variety of gatherings and activities.
- **Enhance current activities and uses:** by providing better access, amenities, and learning opportunities. Participants expressed strong appreciation for the West End waterfront and what it has to offer and would appreciate enhancing its existing offerings.
- **Make Coast Salish culture visible:** celebrate and visibly acknowledge Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh cultures in design, and strengthen connections to history, the land and water.
- **Create commemorative spaces:** to honour key historical community figures, such as Joe Fortes.

## 5.0 Next Steps

The feedback shared in this report will guide us as we refine the West End waterfront design concept. This fall 2023, the public and stakeholders will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommended design approach. The Park Board and Council will review the final design for adoption of the plan in spring 2024. The plan will guide the direction of this area for the next 30 years and beyond.

Update and more information about the project is available at

<https://www.shapeyourcity.ca/west-end-waterfront>

Questions? Please contact the project team at

[westendwaterfront@vancouver.ca](mailto:westendwaterfront@vancouver.ca)

